Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

RESSOURCE PROJECT

SWM Sahelian Wetlands Site

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The challenge

Millions of people depend on the major Sahelian wetlands to meet their food and financial needs. These ecosystems are home to a multitude of waterbirds – migratory and resident – and provide essential livelihoods and services to local communities.

However, climate change, water and agricultural developments, and the intensive exploitation of the natural resources are contributing to the degradation and disappearance of the wetlands. The resulting dramatic changes in habitats have a major impact on the waterbird populations in the Sahel, and the impacts of hunting have yet to be assessed. These populations have already declined by 40 percent between 1960 and 2000. If the waterbirds were to disappear from this region, numerous rural communities would be deprived of a important source of proteins and the sustainability of wetlands would be threatened.

Our response

The RESSOURCE Project stands for “Strengthening expertise in sub-Saharan Africa on birds and their rational use for communities and their environment”.

Restoring and preserving the wetlands is a way to ensure the sustainability of the use of the services and the resources that they provide, in particular waterbirds, for the many rural populations that depend on them. In five countries in the Sahel and the Nile Valley, the RESSOURCE Project, in collaboration with the national authorities and local communities, aims to:

- preserve the ecosystems of major Sahelian wetlands;
- improve knowledge on waterbird populations and on harvesting by hunting;
- develop innovative solutions for the sustainable management and exploitation of wetlands and waterbird populations;
- ensure the sustainability of these solutions through an appropriate legal framework.

"Through the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM)-FAO partnership, we are showing that the conservation of the environment, the sustainable use of the natural resources and the development of local populations are compatible. Promoting innovation and disseminating the most effective solutions through synergies with other partners is an essential point of convergence for our two institutions."

Stéphanie Bouziges-Eschmann,
Secretary General
French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM)

The RESSOURCE Project supports the monitoring of waterbird populations, sustainable levels of hunting, and of effective policies on the conservation of the natural wetlands

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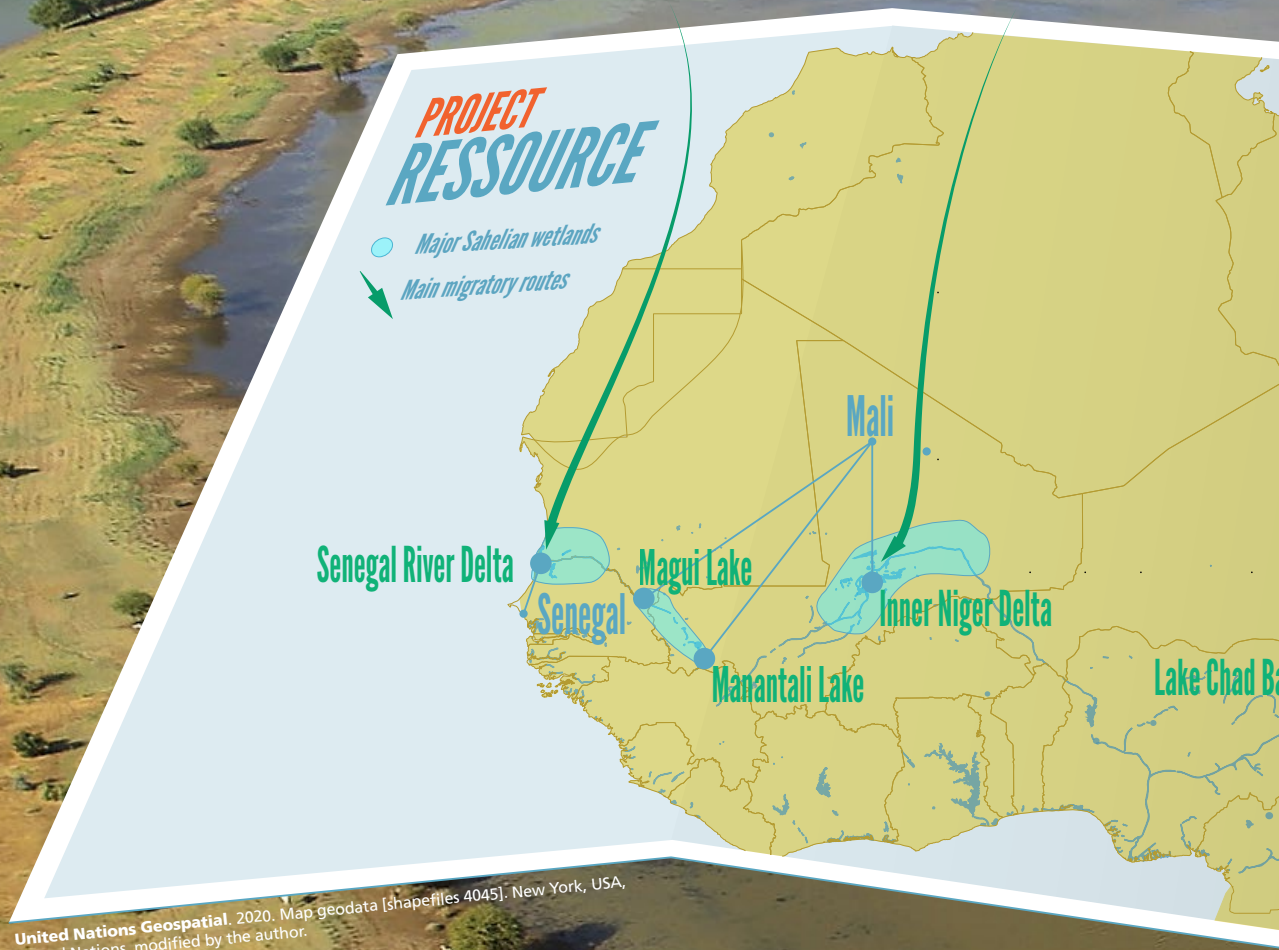
Where we work



United Nations Geospatial. 2020. Map geodata [shapefiles 4045]. New York, USA, United Nations, modified by the author.

Almost 210 species of waterbirds can be found in the major Sahelian wetlands, where almost 100 are wintering Palearctic migrants.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on these map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined.

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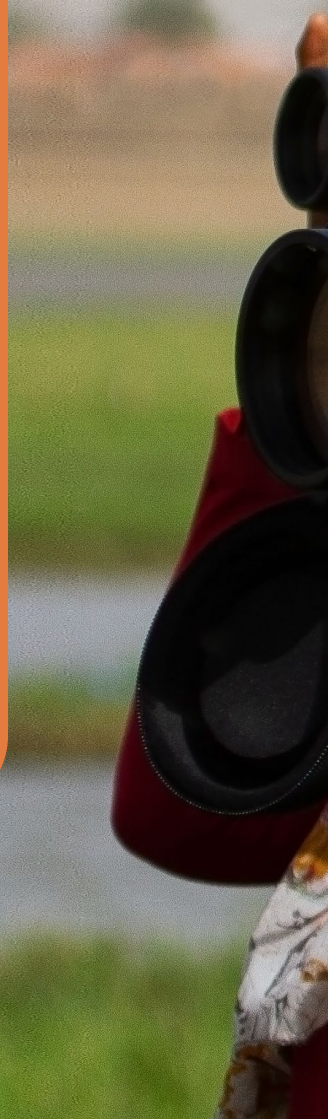
Capacity building

During the first phase of the RESSOURCE Project (2017-2022), more than 150 professionals from national administrations and local communities were trained in the waterbird identification and counting techniques as well as wetlands management.

The RESSOURCE Project is also developing online training accessible to all, entitled “Identifier et dénombrer les oiseaux d’eau d’Afrique du Nord et du Sahel – Comment et dans quels buts?” (“Identifying and Counting North African and Sahelian Waterbirds: How and for What Purposes?”). This will allow an unlimited number of students to acquire new knowledge and skills.

The aim is to strengthen and expand the network of observers and competent technicians in order to carry out ecological monitoring of avifauna and assess the wetlands in Africa



The RESSOURCE Project strengthens North-South and South-South cross-border collaboration

©Association «Les amis des oiseaux» (AAO) -BirdLife Tunisie/Hichem Azafzaf

Wetland restoration and recognition of traditional knowledge

Traditionally, rural communities in the Senegal River Delta used the white water lily (*Nymphea alba*) for its nutritional and therapeutic properties. Water lily seeds are also an essential source of food for waterbirds, especially dabbling ducks.

The RESSOURCE Project works with local communities to convert abandoned rice fields back to water bodies suitable for water lily farming. Small-scale cultivation trials have revealed the significant commercial potential of this resource as an alternative to intensive rice cultivation.

In the Senegal River Delta, the monthly income of a water lily farmer can reach up to EUR 250, while that of a rice farmer varies between EUR 90 and EUR 115. Ensuring a permanent water level on water lily ponds also makes it possible to practice traditional fishing.

"Access to the water lily is becoming easier for us. I wish there was a local market for my children and grandchildren so they could sell the water lily."

Maia Diagne
Water lily farmer in the Senegal River Delta

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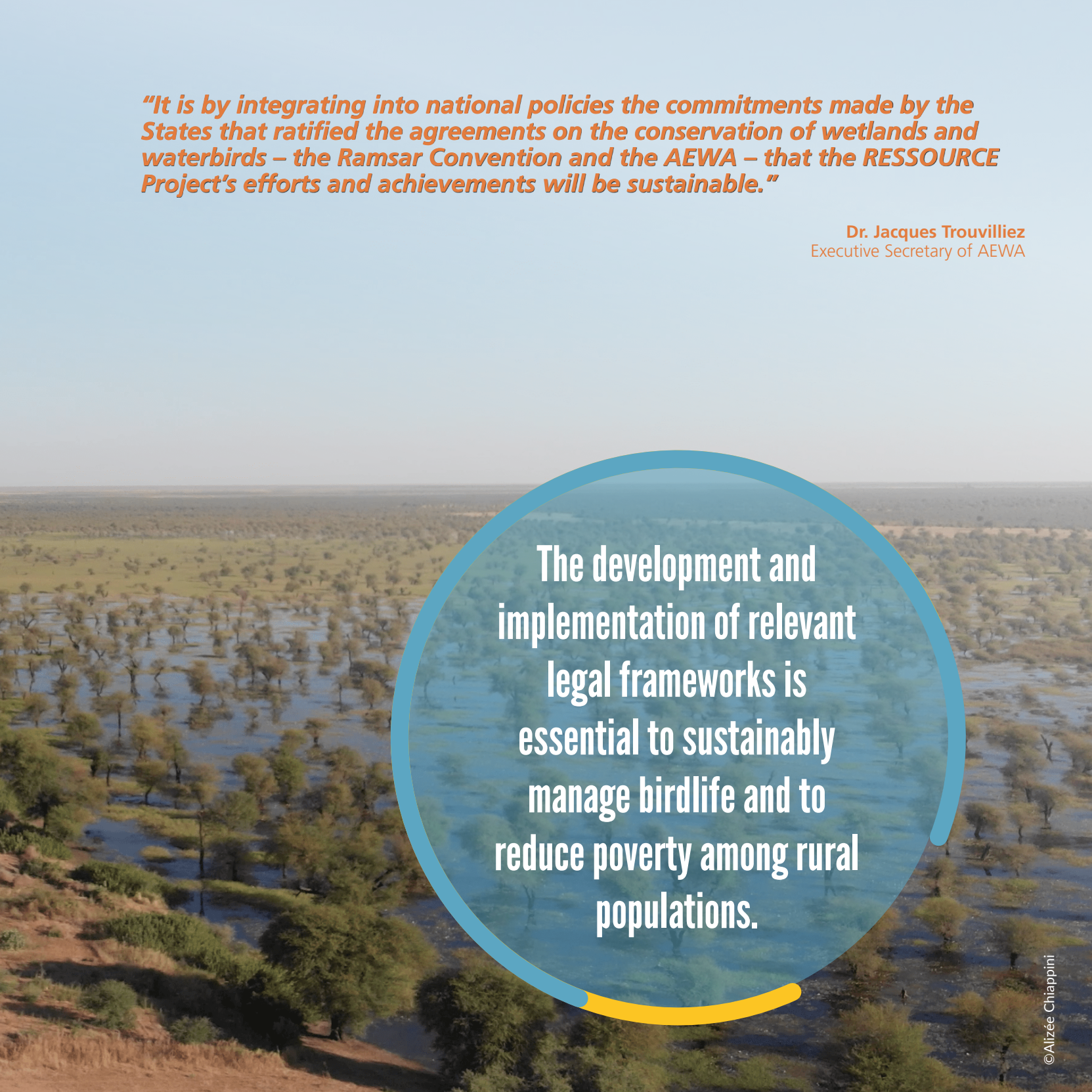
Institutional and legal findings

In the five partner countries, the RESSOURCE Project carried out a legal analysis on the domestication of the Ramsar Convention and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA). The recommendations for revising and/or reforming the legal frameworks advocated by the Project will encourage the sustainable management of waterbirds and wetlands in each country.

Since 2017, the RESSOURCE Project has been working closely with the Sudanese Wildlife Administration and local communities to conserve the remarkable wetlands of the Khor Abu Habil Inner Delta. This successful collaboration led to this exceptional site being designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on 10 April 2022.

"It is by integrating into national policies the commitments made by the States that ratified the agreements on the conservation of wetlands and waterbirds – the Ramsar Convention and the AEWA – that the RESSOURCE Project's efforts and achievements will be sustainable."

Dr. Jacques Trouvilliez
Executive Secretary of AEWA



The development and implementation of relevant legal frameworks is essential to sustainably manage birdlife and to reduce poverty among rural populations.

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Partnership and multi-actor approach

The RESSOURCE Project, coordinated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), is a joint initiative with several technical partners collaborating with national authorities and communities in the five pilot countries to ensure a sustainable environment.

Co-funded by the French Facility for Global Environment and the European Union, the project is the Sahelian component of the Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme, an initiative of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).

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